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## **EOC Spot Report: Region 6, Explosion at TPC Group Facility in Port Neches, TX - Update #5**

**PORT NECHES, TX, NRC#1264987**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**  
**Report as of 11/29/2019 5:30 PM**

**Overview:** Early in the morning on November 27, the National Response Center received a report about an explosion at TPC Group Facility in Port Neches, TX. The facility is regulated under the Risk Management Program. The explosion was felt for miles around, damaging homes and shops in the area. At approximately 1400 CST on November 27, a secondary explosion occurred. Residents within a four-mile radius of the facility have been ordered to evacuate. At 1000 hours on November 29, the Jefferson County judge rescinded the mandatory evacuation. The on-site wastewater treatment plant is still without power.

As of 1500 on November 29, the fire continues to burn although as of this report, multiple media sources report that the Jefferson County Judge's Office is characterizing the fire as contained. Currently, there are nine fires burning, 3 of which are being actively fed. The facility has been working a block isolation plan to address the fires which has been successful in slowing down some of the fires. To prevent releases or fuel or vapors, the facility is not extinguishing fires where gas is actively leaking.

To date, four partial totes of foam have been used. Unified Command has given permission for foam use if necessary for safety reasons. The EPA OSC has requested TPC provide Safety Data Sheets for each type of foam on site. Firefighting water continues to overtop the tank containment berm and discharge to the "201 Canal" which leads to a permitted containment discharge area. Due to the sheen observed in the 201 Canal, the facility's Oil Spill Response Organization (OSRO) has placed absorbent boom every 50-100 feet along the canal. As of 1500 on November 29, the sheen has not made it to the permitted containment area. Perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and Perfluorooctanoate acid (PFOA) currently do not appear to pose a significant threat since only four totes of foaming product were used during firefighting operations in comparison to the amount of water that was used.

EPA, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and TPC teams have been conducting air monitoring throughout the evacuation zone. TCEQ and EPA air monitoring did not report any detections over action levels for 1,3 butadiene, benzene, VOCs, Carbon Monoxide, Oxygen, Hydrogen Sulfide, and Explosive Limit. CTEH air monitoring (conducted on behalf of TPC) and EPA air monitoring have been detecting high particulate levels (300 ug/m<sup>3</sup>) west of the site as the low cloud ceiling and weather has forced the plume to ground level.

**State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, United States Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Civil Support Team have responded. In addition to TCEQ, many local and state departments are on site, including the Jefferson County Judge's Office, Port Neches Police Department, Texas Department of Emergency Management, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Port Neches Fire Department, the Golden Triangle Incident Management Team, and the Jefferson County Office of Emergency Management.

**EPA Actions:** EPA is serving as the lead federal agency for response efforts. As of 15:00, November 29, EPA has deployed 3 personnel and 9 contractors to Port Neches, and 3 EPA personnel 6 contractors are supporting the response from Dallas. EPA's Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT) did not conduct monitoring on November 29 due to a low cloud ceiling. EPA has received an air monitoring plan and an air, water and soil/sediment sampling plan from TPC for review and provided comments. EPA has requested environmental sampling and monitoring data from all Unified Command partners. The data have been shared with ATSDR for the purposes of a health consultation. EPA will conduct water sampling of the affected canal up to the Neches River beginning November 30.

A Story Map has been created for the incident and is public at the <https://response.epa.gov/south4groupfire> website.

**Media Interest:** High

**Media Links:**

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-11-29/evacuation-order-lifted-as-huge-texas-plant-fire-contained>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/massive-fire-chemical-plant-southeastern-texas-contained-n1093331>

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/27/us/port-neches-plant-explosion/index.html>

<https://www.khou.com/article/news/explosions-rock-tpc-group-plant-in-port-neches-3-injured/285-61fc323e-90af-4b90-aec3-fd55dbe859a5>

<https://kfdm.com/news/local/tpc-update-on-fire-and-follow-up-at-port-neches-plant>

<https://www.beaumontenterprise.com/news/article/SE-Texas-chemical-plant-fire-continues-14868966.php>

**The EPA will continue to monitor and provide updates as needed**

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